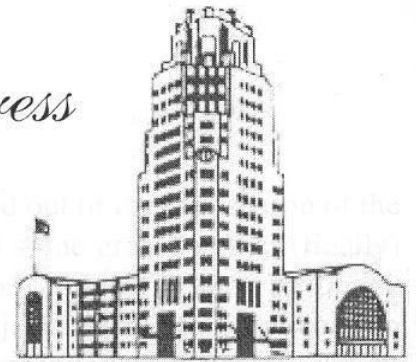


Empire State Express



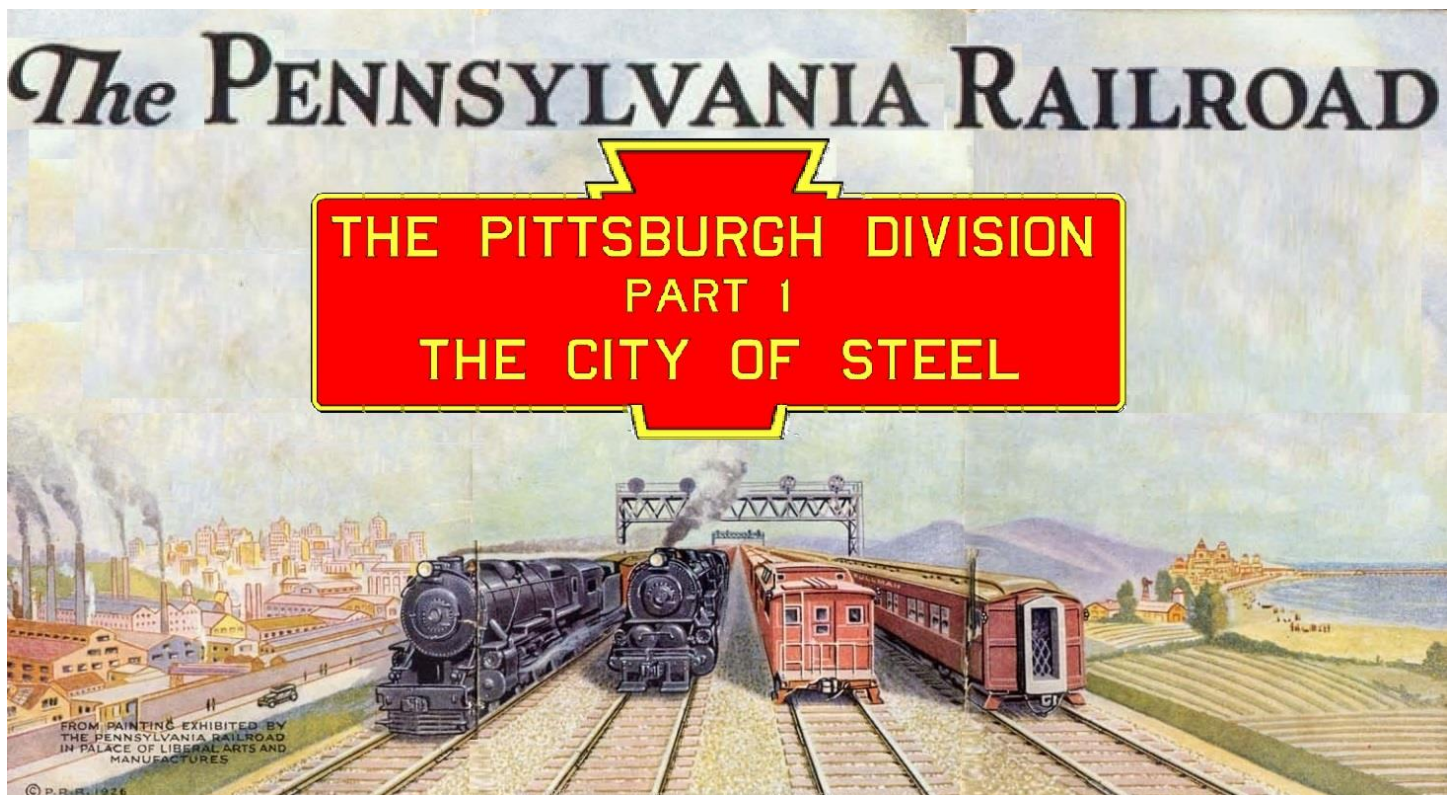
November 2021

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

Editor: John C. Dahl Email nfcnrhs@gmail.com

The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for **THURSDAY, NOV. 11 at 7 PM** at the **Carousel Factory Museum, Thompson St. at Vandervoort St. North Tonawanda, NY.** **NEW day, NEW location!**

THE PRR IN PITTSBURGH WITH TONY SCHILL



Tony Schill writes: "I was raised in Pittsburgh in a time when one could not go far without seeing busy railroad tracks, multiple streetcar lines or some of the many steel mills that lined the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio Rivers. But even then, the days of industrial glory were mostly in the distant past. Fortunately, much photographic evidence of those days survives! This program will take us back (way back) in time to see the incredible degree to which the Pennsylvania Railroad dominated a city which once could rightly proclaim itself as the Steel Center of the World. This is the first of possibly six programs (three of which are completed) that will cover the entire PRR Pittsburgh Division, from Pittsburgh to Altoona."

Important! NEW meeting location and NEW meeting night. THURSDAY NOV. 11, 7 PM CAROUSEL FACTORY MUSEUM, NORTH TONAWANDA, NY

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The fallout from the Covid 19 Pandemic continues to plague us. The latest disruption to our “normalcy” is the loss of our meeting room. This month's meeting at the Carousel Factory Museum is a “test drive”. If it works well, we'll work on a longer term agreement with the Museum. In looking for an alternate venue, we discovered that a lot of groups are in the same situation. Car clubs, scouting groups, seniors groups and the like are all getting pushed out of their meeting spaces because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It's a widespread problem.

This month, as required by our bylaws, we publish the slate of Candidates for election to the Board of Directors at the December meeting. Dennis Hurley has moved out of the area to be near his children and grandchildren. Dennis served on the Board for many years and was always part of the work crew at the Museum; mowing, painting and taking care of things. Please join me in saying Thank you for all that you did, Dennis. Come back and see us when you can!

Please take notice that Al Le Teste has retired as Treasurer. Bruce Becker is taking over that responsibility and Karen Frey is taking the Comptrollers post. Randy Bugucki is joining the Board as Equipment Restoration Director. Becky, who we separately elect this month as Advisory Council Representative, will continue as Recording Secretary. The Board needs this position filled, even if it means someone wearing two hats. We also need a Program Coordinator, which while not a board position, is still a necessary job just the same.

Meanwhile back at the Museum, work continues each Saturday as we are able. We now have Wi-Fi in the Museum. We can now access the internet from the Museum and down the road we will have the ability to remotely monitor the building temperature and perhaps other functions.

We are now in the last quarter of the year. Soon you will see membership renewal forms in the mail. Please return them quickly, I know Neal would appreciate that. I also ask that if you can make a donation please be as generous as you can. We have gotten a great deal accomplished this year. Some of the funding for that came from unexpected sources. We still have to buy insulation for the archive room expansion.

As far as programs go, those of you who have something to show the rest of us, be ready for December. We will do Members Night again. I'm looking forward to some interesting stuff.

As of this writing we are still waiting for a date for the Historic Marker Unveiling at Midway Park. The Markers have arrived, but they are not installed. Christine Wilson, the Park Manager, says it will be spring, probably May, before we can unveil them.

We are signed up for the WNYRHS train show at the Fairgrounds on November 20th & 21st. We have a lot of things to sell. Help loading things at the Museum and carrying them in at the Fairgrounds would be much appreciated. Call Becky at 716 434 5665 to help.

We are also planning on participating in Winterwalk this December 4th. Becky will be decorating the station and she could always use help with that. Great news, there is heat in the middle section of the station where the Lionel layout is.

The Chapter Calendar is selling well through the mail. Have you gotten yours? Makes a great Holiday Gift! So, with all that, I'm looking forward to seeing you folks at the meeting again.

Jim Ball

“SCENE” ON THE LINE



Heading into Autumn on a soft September 30, 2021 evening just before sunset, photographer Larry Gustina was at the Thompson Street crossing in North Tonawanda, within a whistle shout of our Erie RR depot museum. This is train #63 on its way to Niagara Falls, NY. The bike rider patiently waits for this Empire Service train to clear the crossing. In a few seconds the gates will lift. A breeze is picking up from the west as the locomotive horn sounds for the numerous crossings ahead.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Larry for his photo submissions to the Empire State Express and also apologize for the mis-spelling of his last name in the September & October ESX. I'm sometimes my own worst proofreader as editor! JCD

DEPOT FOR SALE IN WESTFIELD, NY

“Built in 1904, The Westfield Passenger depot provided passenger service for the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern and the New York Central Railroad until 1967. Passenger service continued under Amtrak until 1976. Once passenger service was discontinued in Westfield, the station was used by Conrail and subsequent owners as a storage building until 1988, when a new owner restored the building. The current owner has continued to restore and maintain the station, which is currently used as a small reception and event venue and gallery, You can easily imagine going back in time and riding the rails from this unique property. Featuring Romanesque architecture, this is a unique opportunity to own a piece of history. The building is sold in As Is condition and

DEPOT - continued



has no heat and cold water only. The wagon with baggage and the signal light outside stay with the property. Other contents and stage lighting are not included, but some items may be negotiable. New roof was installed in 2020. Zoning code is currently 484- 1 use bldg dstr warehouse. List \$199,000 “
- from Howard Hanna Real Estate web site listing.

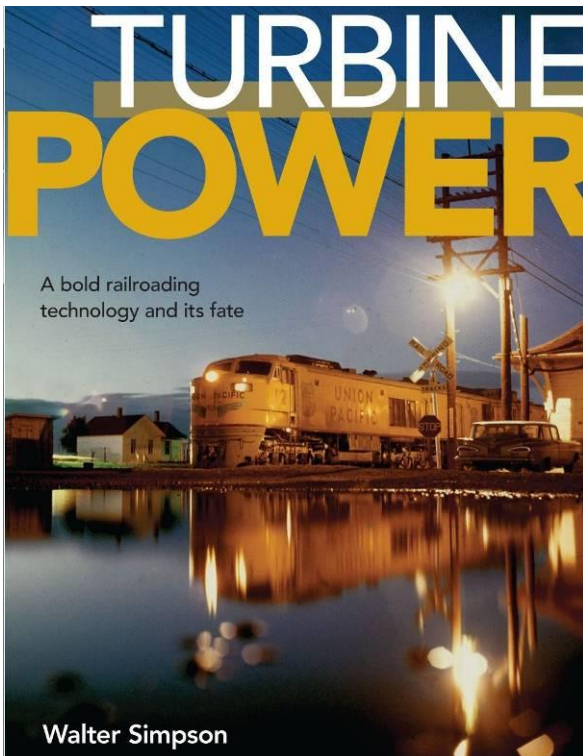
Since the date of the photo, the listing has been removed from the realtor web site, so apparently the building has been sold. Can any of our readers fill us in on status for this landmark of the New York Central RR?

JCD photo, September 17, 2021

THE RAILROAD POET

“October 13, 2021. Good sounds out of the Frontier Yard today. Many heavy things being slowly pushed and pulled about. Rumbling, clanking, and whirring, bells being rung.” – *in the style of Walt Whitman, submitted by an anonymous admirer of the railroad.*

THE RAILFAN’S BOOKSHELF - an occasional column of book reviews



Turbine Power, A bold railroading technology and its fate
By: Walter Simpson, Kalmbach Media 2020

In March 2020 on the very day the world as we knew it then was rapidly getting shut down due to the Covid 19 pandemic, Walter Simpson presented to the Chapter an informative and delightfully scripted and illustrated program. As it turned out, that presentation would be the last we would see from anyone for several months. The author has long been fascinated by the technology and history of railroading’s trials and experiments into use of turbines to power locomotives. *Turbine Power* is the first book to bring together technical information and analysis about all the various American railroad steam and gas turbine motive power projects during the 1939-2003 period. Walter takes a complex technology and distills it down to very understandable terms for those of us to whom the inner workings of anything mechanical is somewhat of a mystery. The text is a delight to read, not technically over our heads, and the historic photos and illustrations utilized tell the story in a clear, concise, and artistically pleasing manner. Published by Kalmbach, it is a high-quality book. - JCD

RAILROAD MEMORIES

By: Greg Lund – photos by the author



A recent trip and tour of the Central Terminal in Buffalo, and meeting with some of the great people I've worked with over the years sparked some writing inspiration. Since I haven't written one of these diatribes lately I figured the inspiration might be worth the effort of writing.

I've been a railfan since I was about 8-9 years old watching trains along the Erie Lackawanna s' former DL&W Black Rock Branch which ran directly behind our house on Taunton Place in North Buffalo. Those were heady times, the EL ran a couple trains a day, The N&W (Wabash) ran F units on their trains, usually four a day, and the C&O ran trains too, usually four per day - sometimes more including Clinchfield Coal trains (yeah.. across Canada still trying to figure that out !) My Dad was a photography buff and took all kinds of pictures: slides, B&W, so I got to know the difference between Tri-X, Plus-x, and what "Stop Baths" were for etc. Too bad I didn't get his creativity trait in photography!!!

Anyway fast forward to March of 1979, I was 18 and was attending Canisius College here in Buffalo, my Dad had passed away in 1978, but his words to me "Find a job you enjoy doing and it doesn't seem so much like work" echoed within me, and still do to this day. Two of my best friends Rodney Kantorski, and Marcus Gillebaard both had hired out as towermen, and I wanted to as well, but this was a time where not a lot of hiring was going on anywhere. Some retirements, and with a lucky break supplied by Marcus and his mom, I managed to get a "referral" to Conrail and the folks who did the hiring. Bill Hickey was the guy who did the hiring, his title escapes me, but he was the guy to get referred to, and I did. Only thing was they said they weren't hiring at the time. Rodney suggested bugging Don Connelly who was the Asst. Division Supt., so I did. I'll never forget speaking with him, in the paneling lined office adjacent to the Chief Dispatchers Office, and him picking up the phone and calling the guy who assigned towermen jobs. "How are we set for towermen?" "uh-huh", "Ok I'll talk with him". Mr. Connelly then told me they probably needed a couple more towermen, and that when and if the call came for them I'd be in line for the job. About two weeks later while working at Canisius High School (I worked in the Jesuit residence, doing maintenance, and washing dishes, dinner prep etc.) my mother called

RAILROAD MEMORIES - continued

from home, “you got your damn phone call, you take your physical tomorrow”. (She wasn’t happy about me leaving College). After taking the physical, I was told to speak with the guy who assigned towermen Jack Michel for my first assignment which was stapling the Bulletins which were then on pink shaded paper, together for them to be sent out from the Chief Dispatchers Office to the field. The next day I was to report to the Rules Examiner, a former PRR Dispatcher named Jim Young. Jim was a great rules man, very matter of fact, and I think a bit of a closet buff. I was the only guy in the class, so it was one on one and he beat me up pretty good, “You need to know this...” “Your words to the crews are very important.....” He made sure before I left that I had the best start any young railroader could get. So began on March 16, 1979 a career that has now spanned 36+ years.

The first place they sent me to qualify was Tower 47 at the west end of Frontier Yard. “47” was a busy place between trains to/from the Lovejoy Connection (to Bison), off the Belt, all the through running trains, passenger trains, and locals, not to mention the Pulldowns on the south side of Frontier. Like I said, it was busy. Why there as a first place? Word had gotten around that I’d visited Rodney at 47 many times and they knew I knew how to run the place. Ha, yeah qualified “laugh-out-loud”! First guy I qualified with was Bruce McCullough who just recently retired as a DS (dispatcher) in Selkirk. Bruce was awesome to qualify with and the day was usually spent laughing about something or the other. Bruce made things easy because he allowed me to think stuff through.

I worked with other operators, Gerry Takac, Bruce Heatly, and eventually I qualified and was on my own. First night by myself, 11pm-7am shift, busy night and about halfway through commercial power goes out, track circuits down everywhere as batteries died, trains stopped, absolute bedlam. The DS Walt Ridley who at this point didn’t know me, or I him, guided me on what he wanted done, and I figured I made a complete moron out of myself with my inexperience. About a week later I stopped up in the DS office as I was going to meet Rodney for some food after work. I stopped in and introduced myself to Walt apologizing for my inexperience that fateful few nights ago. Walt looked at me and said “That was you? You sounded so calm and collected, you did just fine”. Perhaps he was being kind, but it left an impression. Eventually I got qualified on the DS Office Jobs Freight Delay and Servo clerk (Freight Man and Servo Boy- another story). In those jobs you got to know a lot of people in the Dispatchers office and regional office (at that time in New Haven, CT), as well as other Dispatchers offices (Altoona, Cleveland, Utica, St. Thomas, Ont.) as you made line ups, read the Servos (Hot box detectors), prepared reports, cars handled by locals, performance of all trains, set outs, pick ups, etc. all reported manually to regional, and other offices so they knew what was coming. There were two clerical people on duty 24/7 to do all this.

Back out in the towers, I worked 47 48, 49, BC, RB(Central River Bridge), FW, BRB(Buffalo Creek Bridge site of current CP-Draw), Southwestern Target, Bison West End, DM, and some short stints on temp jobs at Black Rock (former DLW yard office), Bayview (after the infamous Cattaraugus Creek wreck of SLSE which had two loaded vinyl chloride cars upside-down in between the bridge piers on Dead Creek (right next to Cat. Creek)) and even working LV’s Niagara Jct one day to run the “crosstown”. (Just ask the DS...he’ll tell you what to do). I also got to qualify on several of the “Agents” assignments qualifying on but only working sparingly the Buffalo Agent, Silver Springs/Attica Agent, and Batavia Agent.



RAILROAD MEMORIES - continued



The Central side

I already talked a bit about Tower 47, and will do so again, but some of the towers weren't as well known, or as busy...

Tower 48 was the east end of the passenger station, was fairly quiet, handling passenger trains and trains off the belt, or anything going the "low side" tracks 3 or 4 toward Frontier. 48 also handled trains routed track 29 "The Depot runner" which is closely aligned with today's 4 yard lead. I recall working 48 one day with the DS requesting that we run train PXSE track 4 and down the "1st lead" at 48 hence out track 2 from 48 to 47. The "1st lead" was a rickety lead that connected track 4 and the Belt with tracks 1 and 2 passing directly next to Tower 48. The idea of a heavy perishable train running that close to the Tower I occupied, on track that was less than stellar didn't thrill me, but as PXSE came cruising down the 1st lead at 15-20 MPH (lines west engineers were notorious for pushing speed limits) I hid in the opposite end of the tower putting 300+ levers on the Tower 48 machine between me and the CR version of the E-coli Express.

48 had some interesting characters to work with. On days there was a nice nice guy named Bob Newman. Bob was a former Dispatcher and Chief Dispatcher and was a good guy to qualify with; afternoons was Bernie Bailey. Bernie was an American Indian and was an absolute riot to work with. Funny as anything. Working with Bernie on afternoons at the other towers (all connected via a blockline) was as close to a comedy show as you'd get to. Nights was John Brunner, John was a nice guy but somewhat gruff. The relief was Al Ellis, who was a preacher. Saturday mornings Al would "preach" on the blockline which you'd either turn down because you didn't want to listen, or you'd listen as other Ops tore apart Al's preachings (kind of like "swearfest").

Tower 49, west end of the depot was a lot busier with trains off the belt going west, all through running trains, trains off the Buffalo Creek Running tracks, and the occasional passenger move made for an interesting workplace. 49 also hosted the remnants of the "electric chair" which was a locomotive seat mounted on a pedestal, with an overhead electric connection. The "chair" rode on tracks mounted on the floor, and could at one time move back and forth along the lever bed. This was done by the NYC to save the expense of

RAILROAD MEMORIES - continued “levermen” (at one time there were three at 49). At the time I worked there the chair was there, but served as a seat at the one end of the tower, nothing more.

One evening was a “Dimension train” that came racing down track 5 from Tower 47. Dimension trains were wider than normal cars with certain restrictions. Well, this one came flying down track 5. I recall looking at the dwarf signal the train was passing, watched the lenses go from green over green, to red as the train passed, then BAM, the dwarf twisted sideways, then BLAM, dwarf jettisoned about 10 feet airborne. I had to tell the DS that the Dimension train KO’d the dwarf signal on 5. Signal maintainer reported the signal was a total loss, replaced it with a cobbled together dwarf that was propped up with some wood sticks. I think it was that way ‘til the very end.

The Ops there were Ed Monica on days. A cigar smoker, Ed was another guy who was a riot to work with (Rodney could chime in here regarding torpedoes, splice bars and a concrete pad at the end of the tower if he wants). Afternoons was Mike Gerhardt (yep Engineer Mike’s dad). Mike wasn’t overly friendly and shooed you out of the tower if you were posting early. Not sure why but an early quit when you’re 19 yrs old is welcome. 3rd trick was Cory Bell, I didn’t get to work with him much because they were in a hurry to get us towermen qualified, if you were qualified 1st and 2nd, you could work 3rd. Marcus wound up at 49 3rd trick regular when Cory went off sick. Relief was Curt Taylor, Curt was kind of crusty with thick glasses, and a lot of guys didn’t like qualifying with him because he wouldn’t let you do anything. I posted a couple days with Curt and he and I got along fine. You’d also get some extra men when the regular Op took a day off, most of them were good too, Bud Brennan, younger guys like Mike Gugino, Marcus, Rodney, were all great guys to learn from.

Towers 48 and 49 were at one time referred to as the “strawberry patch” no doubt in deference to the sea of dwarf signals that were these two interlockings. Each had their own nuances like when the DS lined a train into you from CP-T you’d hear a loud Grunt much like if you squeezed a duck. The interlockings being so large you had to be careful how you lined trains up, and if you couldn’t get a signal, you had to retrace your steps checking signal levers, machine locks, check locks (for setting the “traffic” between towers) and above all switches. The machines were equipped with the “vise grip” style GRS levers as opposed to the Pistol Grip type levers at 47 and RB. BC Tower (where current CP-2 is) had a much older machine with pistol grips but with open “dogs” so you could visibly see the interlocking levers, and “dogs” move when you threw the levers. At other locations the same interlockings/dogs were there but were covered by wooden covers.

BC also had a High Car Detector readout located at Bayview Tower about 6 miles west of BC as well as a Block line not only for the Buffalo DS, but also for Cleveland DS primarily because BC was the last open office until you got to OD Tower in Ashtabula 120+ miles away, so it was the last place for orders to get hooped up to westbound trains.

More to come.

Editors note: We will continue more Railroad Memories in a future issue of ESX. There are many stories waiting to be told about railroading in Western NY and nearby Ontario. You don’t have to have been a railroad employee. This column is intended for all of us who have a railway memory to share.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

December’s meeting entertainment is our annual Member’s Night. Please limit your photos to about 15 minutes maximum so that all who want to participate will have time to present! We are digitally oriented these days BUT if you have traditional 35MM slides, just let Jim Ball know in advance so we will have the trusty old Kodak projector on hand for you!

SCENE ON THE LINE – New York & Lake Erie #75 Memories

Photos by Tony Schill



In her original South Buffalo colors, New York & Lake Erie S-2 #75 is spotted at Little Valley, NY, July 11, 1979. The track now ends in Cattaraugus, NY and much of the right of way from there thru Little Valley towards Salamanca is now a trail.



Updated to a NY&LE scheme, the S-2 and freight train is at Cattaraugus, NY, October 8, 1982. Much of the track in Cattaraugus is now out of service and this exact location may very well be torn up. An early August 2021 charter trip on the branch only went as far as Persia Road, still a few miles outside of Cattaraugus village.

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- NOV 11** **NEW MEETING LOCATION AND DATE: Thursday 11/11 @ 7PM, Carousel Factory Museum, Thompson St. @ Vandervoort St. North Tonawanda, NY**
Program: Tony Schill, PRR's Pittsburgh Division.
- NOV 20-21** **WNYRHS Train Show, Hamburg, NY Fairgrounds, 10AM-5PM. Chapter table needs help!**
- DEC** **Regular Meeting, LOCATION AND DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED**
Program: Members Photo Night.

The Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) publicly supported organization.

Contributions may be deductible for income tax purposes in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service.

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